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ESTABLISHMENT COVER-UP

LYING TORY SCUM

● Boris
Johnson
partied in
lockdown as
people died

● Drive him
out over lies,
corruption
and cost of
living crisis

STRIKES

Big rail action
can hit the
Tories hard

THE TORIES are trying
to stop rail workers from
striking for better pay.

Potential strikes at
Network Rail and 15 English
train operating companies
are worrying the bosses.
Now ministers are talking
tough and threatening new
anti-union laws. But strikes
can force them back.

>>Page 20

POLICE



**Spycop, police
brutality and
resistance**

CRIMINAL defence solicitor
Matt Foot talks about
his new book *Charged—
How the Police Try to
Suppress Protest*.

Foot discusses the recent
episodes of repression and
how they link to earlier
struggles. He concludes with
a call for more resistance.

>>Pages 14&15

UKRAINE

War escalates as
Tories call to
arm Moldova

FOREIGN SECRETARY Liz
Truss wants to take another
step towards flooding
eastern Europe with weapons
by arming Moldova.

Nato should provide
modern weaponry to the state
which borders Ukraine, she
said. Such a move would only
increase growing tensions.

>>Page 6



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'I will not stand by and let anti-social individuals keep causing misery and chaos'

Home Secretary Priti Patel trying again to put curbs on protesting

'Gong-Go-Round'

What Tories call a group of wealthy donors who collect honours after donations

'The PM was drinking and enjoying himself along with everyone else and pretty much gets away with it'

A senior civil servant is miffed that they were fined more than Boris Johnson

'Parliament could burn down today, tomorrow, any day'

Former minister Andrea Leadsom offers hope to us all

'The government is going to have to take on rail unions just as Mrs Thatcher took on the NUM—by destroying them'

The Spectator magazine is excited about the government attacking strikes

Government wins case to protect its abusive Nazi spy

THE government last week successfully blocked the publication of the name of an MI5 spy who had Nazi materials and used his status to terrorise his partner.

The BBC has a video showing the man threatening to kill the woman and attacking her with a machete.

It also says, "Evidence shows that he is a right wing extremist with a violent past."

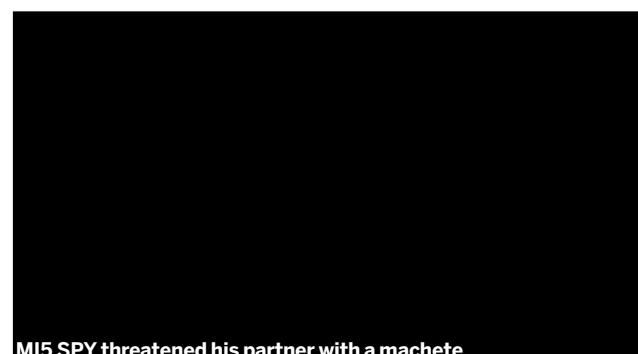
Beth, a British national, met the agent on a dating site. The couple went on to live together in Britain.

Beth—not her real name—says he sexually assaulted her, and was abusive and coercive.

She says he used his position with the British security services to terrorise her.

The man collected weapons and made her watch

WORLD MILITARY expenditure surpassed the two trillion US dollar mark for the first time in 2021, reaching £1,694 billion. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global spending in 2021 was 12 percent higher than in 2012. Britain was the world's fourth largest military spender, above Russia, which has twice the population and 70 times the land mass of Britain. The top 15 countries accounted for 81 percent of global expenditure.



MI5 SPY threatened his partner with a machete

terrorist videos of executions and murders, she says.

He praised various white supremacist mass murderers and stated his intent to commit similar acts.

During a search of the home after the machete attack, local police officers had discovered material

detectives, who in turn seized various items. A terrorism investigation into the agent ensued, but he left Britain while it was ongoing.

When the BBC put its findings to the government, it took the broadcaster to the High Court, trying to stop this story being made public.

In a legal battle, the corporation argued that women had a right to know his identity and it would protect potential victims from harm.

The court legally prevented the BBC from naming the man. The government said it "will not comment on security or intelligence", but the court order is "aimed at protecting national security and avoiding a real and immediate risk to life, safety and privacy."

including the man's Nazi paraphernalia.

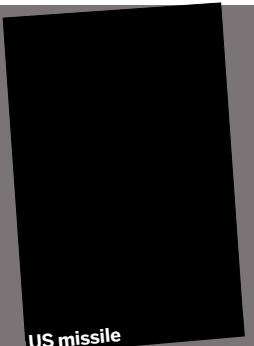
The BBC has seen a police log showing the evidence found by officers, such as a private diary in which X had written about killing Jews.

He had also written about killing Beth. Local officers called in counter-terror

THE GOVERNMENT has said it will not implement measures—recommended by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry—that would have ensured disabled people could more safely evacuate high-rise blocks of flats in emergencies.

The inquiry recommended that owners of high-rise residential buildings should be legally required to prepare a personal emergency evacuation plan for all residents who may find it difficult to "self-evacuate".

But the home office said last week that it had concluded that such laws would cost too much.



US missile

No come back for US massacre in Syria

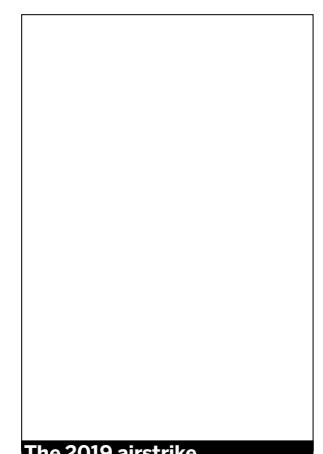
NO US personnel will be held accountable for a 2019 airstrike that killed scores of Syrian civilians including women and children, the Pentagon said last week.

It announced that an internal investigation found that no laws of war were broken and that there was no cover-up of the incident as alleged in a New York Times investigation.

It admitted that after the attack near the Syrian town of Baghuz that "policy compliance deficiencies at multiple levels of command led directly to numerous delays in reporting".

It also said "administrative deficiencies contributed to the impression" that the US military did not take the incident seriously.

But the conclusion was



The 2019 airstrike

DWP failure kills again

THE DEPARTMENT for Work and Pensions (DWP) failed to alert GPs and social services to the "very extensive" difficulties a disabled man was facing, three months before he died in conditions of severe self-neglect.

A safeguarding review of the death of Mr A, from Leeds, concluded that a healthcare assessor working for a DWP contractor was probably the last person to see him alive, other than his disabled wife.

The face to face benefits assessment was carried out so Mr A could be transferred from long-term incapacity benefit to employment and support allowance (ESA).

The assessment report was passed on to the DWP, and he was placed in the ESA support group, but

no attempt was made to contact his local GP or Leeds council, to inform them about the substantial problems he was facing.

It is just the latest evidence of years of failings by the DWP to prioritise the safety of benefit claimants, with ministers repeatedly saying it does not have a legal duty to "safeguard" its claimants.

His body was found in his bed "surrounded by piles of household waste, his body severely neglected, emaciated and decomposed".

Captain Tom gin scam

GIN SOLD to raise money for a foundation set up in the name of Captain Sir Tom Moore has been pulled from sale after an apparent breach in charity law.

Bottles of Captain Sir Tom branded gin were sold for £100 on Otterbeck Distillery's website since April last year, with "All profits" donated to the Captain Tom Foundation.

Despite legislation stating that the actual amount going to charity from a commercial partnership must be specified, the limited edition 50cl bottles were flogged without meeting this requirement.

After The Independent

newspaper had raised a series of questions, the gin was quietly removed from sale.

In another development, the Captain Tom Foundation—already at the centre of an ongoing Charity Commission regulatory compliance case—is subject to "regulatory enquiries" by the Fundraising Regulator.

Accounts published in February showed that the Captain Tom Foundation had paid tens of thousands of pounds to firms run by his daughter.

Hannah Ingram-Moore, and son-in-law, Colin. The accounts described the transactions as reimbursements.

that there was "no malicious or wrongful intent" by the military and that there was "no evidence" to support allegations of a cover-up.

The New York Times reported that US troops watching real-time footage of the strike "looked on in stunned disbelief," according to an officer who was there.

One military analyst said that "we just dropped on 50 women and children."

After the strike, civilian observers "found piles of dead women and children," according to Times reporters Dave Philipps and Eric Schmitt, who spent months investigating the attack.

"A legal officer flagged the strike as a possible war crime that required an investigation."

"But at nearly every step, the military made moves that concealed the catastrophic strike," the reporters explained.

"The death toll was downplayed. Reports were delayed, sanitised, and classified. United States-led coalition forces bulldozed the blast site. And top leaders were not notified."

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Cops and Johnson united around a gross cover-up

by CHARLIE KIMBER and SOPHIE SQUIRE

BORIS JOHNSON was plunged back into crisis on Monday after pictures emerged of him drinking at a party during a Covid lockdown.

He is pictured toasting colleagues while standing by a table laden with wine bottles, glasses, food and other drinks.

A lockdown was in place at the time the photographs were taken, with indoor gatherings of two or more people banned.

The police fined other people believed to be in the same photo, but they let Johnson off.

This is how the establishment works, covering up for one another and hiding their crimes. Probably Johnson will escape again.

Civil servant Sue Gray was this week set to release her full report on Downing Street parties during lockdown. The Times newspaper claimed Johnson had met Gray to pressure her not to publish the report.

But in any case it is unlikely to be so damning that Johnson feels he has to go.

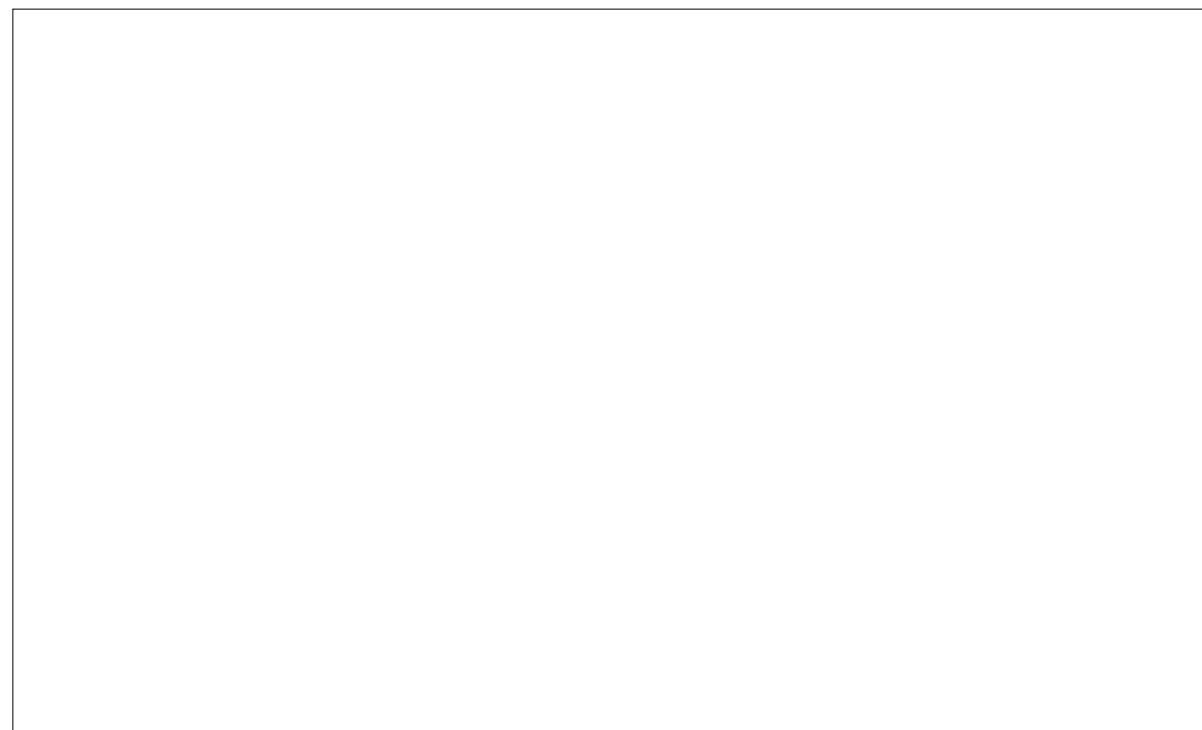
Behind the day to day events and the constant revelations of lies is a relentless pattern of protecting Johnson.

Met police last week loyally informed him he wouldn't receive more fines over parties that broke lockdown regulations.

Its statement detailed 126 police fines connected to Downing Street events. There were five parties where Johnson was present and where other people have been fined, but where the prime minister escaped without penalty.

They were parties until Johnson arrived, when they apparently became "work events".

They are the 20 May 2020 party, infamous for the invitation telling



BORIS JOHNSON attended a booze-fuelled Christmas party quiz at Number 10 during lockdown

people to "Bring your own bottle", and Johnson's birthday party on 19 June 2020.

There's Lee Cain's leaving party on 13 November 2020 and the Number 10 flat party celebrating the end of Dominic Cummings the same day.

And then the 17 December 2020 leaving event for Captain Steve Higham and the 14 January 2021 leaving event for private secretaries.

The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK group said, "Conservative MPs promised they would make their mind up about the prime minister when the Sue Gray report is released.

"Every day they do not act they allow a man who gaslit us and lied to the faces of the bereaved when he claimed he did 'everything possible' to save our loved ones to remain in the

highest office in the land."

Carrie Johnson, the wife of the prime minister, has also been told she isn't going to receive any further fines.

Partygate may not bring down Johnson—although it should have done. It was a symbol of his contempt for everyone except his charmed circle. It was a sign of the fatal recklessness of the Covid policies. It's about more than lies, it sums up a ruling class attitude.

Johnson must not now be allowed to escape the fury over the government's lack of action over the cost of living crisis.

On other pages...

Fill the streets with rage on 18 June demonstration >>Pages 10&11

Tory MP accused of rape

A TORY MP has been accused of spiking at least four victims with "date rape" drugs.

The MP who has yet to be named, drugged a fellow Tory MP who woke up to find his nipples being licked.

A Labour MP and a flatmate of another Tory MP have also reported a similar experience at the hands of the MP in question. It has been reported that this MP is known and is being spoken about among other Tory MPs.

In a separate case, a Tory MP has been arrested for rape but was released on police bail last week.

The Metropolitan Police have said that the man stands accused of assaults that he is alleged to have committed between 2000 and 2009. The uncaring attitudes of Tory MPs to sexual assault by their colleagues were also shown this week.

Lichfield MP Michael Fabricant, who—after hearing that the MP accused of rape was told to stay away from parliament—tweeted, "I'll be there," with a winking emoji.

Sleazy Tories step down triggering by-elections

TWO BY-ELECTIONS on 23 June have been triggered after Tory MPs were found guilty of sexual misconduct and sexual assault.

Tory MP for Wakefield Imran Ahmad Khan was convicted of groping a 15 year old boy earlier this month—a crime he committed in 2008.

During the trial the court heard that Khan forced the child to drink gin at a party before taking him upstairs. He then forced him to watch pornography and assaulted him. The victim of the

Imran Ahmad Khan

assault said he felt "scared, vulnerable, numb, shocked and surprised" as the assault took place.

Khan vowed to quit the Tory party in early April, but didn't formally resign until late last month. Wakefield voted in Khan in 2019. He was the first Tory to win in that seat since 1923.

On the same day as the by-election will be held in Wakefield, constituents in Tiverton and Honiton in Devon will also head to the polls.

This comes after Tory MP Neil Parish resigned. He admitted that he watched pornography on his phone in the House of Commons.

Parish, who was the MP for Tiverton and Honiton for 12 years, described his porn watching as a "moment of madness."

These sleazy Tories are right to step down. Pressure must kick the rest of them out.

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Tories won't act as rising inflation hits wages and benefits

by CHARLIE KIMBER

BACK STORY

PRICES ARE now rising at an average of 11.1 percent a year according to the most accurate measure of inflation, the RPI index, released last week.

So if your pay, benefits or pension are going up less than that—as they are for nearly everyone—then you are taking a big hit.

Even the government's favourite CPI inflation measure, which excludes some basic costs, hit 9 percent. It's a 40-year high.

The latest statistics are not just some ordinary and forgettable set of dry numbers. They are a reflection of class war.

For tens of millions of workers the price surge means worries about the rent or the mortgage, increased debts, cutting back and facing a tough future.

Already poverty is spreading. The number of people opening Universal Credit claims each week has surged by 13 percent in the last three months.

Those at the top just throw up their hands and deny responsibility. On Wednesday chancellor Rishi Sunak tried to blame petrol retailers not passing on his fuel duty cut for the rise.

That's a pinprick. Grant Fitzner, chief economist at the Office for National Statistics, said, "Around three quarters of the increase in the annual rate this month came from utility bills." But the government does nothing effective over this.

Measure

So what can be done? Chancellor Rishi Sunak told MPs last Tuesday, "There is no measure any government can take, any law we can pass, that can make those global forces disappear overnight."

Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey, who dares to lecture workers about pay restraint while taking £575,000 a year, says he's unable to stop inflation hitting 10 percent.

In part, they are admitting that real power under capitalism does not lie in parliaments but in the boardrooms of the giant corporations. But of

Inflation has been rising steadily since late last year

● The cost of basic goods and services needed by the average two-child household in Britain has risen by £400 a month

● That's far higher than even the record levels of official inflation

● Energy prices, fares and fuel, food and childcare cost rises are driving the pressure on working class people

● Meanwhile benefits, pensions and wages are for most held at levels far below inflation

course there are measures Sunak and Bailey could take.

They could cap prices and rents, boost benefits, raise wages immediately in the public sector, increase the minimum wage to at least £15 an hour and tax profits hard.

They could renationalise the privatised power companies and hold down the bills. They could withdraw the national insurance rise.

Confronting

What they really meant was there is nothing that can be done without confronting capitalist priorities.

Boris Johnson told Tories in Wales on Monday that work is the best route out of poverty.

But he overlooks that wages aren't keeping up with inflation. Over 60 percent of families living in poverty have at least one person at work according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Additionally 41 percent of universal credit claimants are in work. The blame for high inflation doesn't lie with workers, it lies with greedy bosses and the Tories.

Workers' battles for an above-inflation pay rise must spread with national strikes. The TUC union federation's demonstration in London on 18 June has to be built as big as possible.

But it must then be a launchpad for a massive acceleration of strikes and other forms of resistance. "It's a pity as that would have

RISING FOOD prices are forcing millions of people to cut their budgets

Bosses threat to striking offshore workers who 'started revolution'

BOSSES RESPONDED to unofficial strikes across oil platforms in the North Sea by threatening to sack the workforce. A letter from subcontractor Bilfinger gave workers until Friday afternoon of last week to commit to return to work.

The strike by Bilfinger workers, which started at the Elgin platform 150 miles off Aberdeen, spread across 16 installations.

One worker Adam said the action—which "needed to happen for a very long time"—involved "thousands" of workers".

They "wanted £7 to be added to their basic rate an hour".

He said the atmosphere on Total's Elgin platform was one of "anger, disappointment, and frustration. It's been exhausting".

An offshore worker on the Britannia platform told Socialist Worker, "The walkouts spread over the last two days. On the platform I'm on, workers stayed out for the day shift and night shift for two days.

Strikes on oil rigs hitting bosses hard

"Bilfinger has a fair amount of workers here so that means little work was done except safety critical stuff.

"At one point it looked like it might spread to other service companies, but that never materialised.

There was some talk of picketing the helicopter deck to stop crew changes, but that wasn't taken seriously.

"It's a pity as that would have

stopped management coming out yesterday for talks."

Bilfinger stopped workers' pay. And then in a change of tack last Thursday Bilfinger announced its decision to join the Energy Services Agreement (ESA) following the strikes.

The ESA is an agreement on minimum pay and conditions covering 5,000 offshore workers agreed between the GMB, Unite and RMT unions and 14 employers.

It aims to maintain "stability and certainty on a substantive cost element for the industry and investors". After Bilfinger joined the ESA, the Unite union requested a return to "normal working practices", it claimed talks could resolve problems.

In contrast, workers believe the ESA move was to ensure Bilfinger did not have to alter the pay rates.

This isn't the end. Messages circulated among workers that said, "The wage revolution has started."

THE MAN imposing bitter poverty and hardship on tens of millions of people in Britain has officially entered the ranks of the super-wealthy.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty have made the Sunday Times Rich List of Britain's wealthiest 250 people for the first time. Their fortune is estimated at £730 million.

How can anyone believe Sunak understands what life is like for the people who "self-disconnect" from their electricity and gas because they can't afford it? Or the parents who don't eat so their children can have a meal?

Last month it became clear Murty had claimed non-dom status to legally not pay tax on annual dividends she receives from a £690 million stake in the IT company Infosys. It

was founded by her billionaire father.

The Tories see all this as success. Justice secretary Dominic Raab said Sunak was "a fantastic example of someone who's been successful in business."

He added, "I think we want more of those people." The entire list is an indictment of a class society that's becoming ever more unequal.

British

Overall, the richest individuals and families this year are worth £711 billion, an 8 percent rise on last year's £658 billion.

The number of British billionaires has reached a new record, up six from last year to 177. Their loot has increased by 9.4 percent to a record £653 billion.

Luke Hildyard, executive director of the High Pay Centre, calculated that if total household wealth in

Britain had increased at the same rate as the wealth of the Top 20 entrants on the rich list over the past decade, the average household would now have £205,000 more than they currently do.

Sri and Gopi Hinduja topped the list with an estimated £28.5 billion hoard.

It's the largest wealth ever recorded by the Rich List.

Number two was Sir James Dyson with his £23 billion wealth.

It's not just

businessmen cashing in.

The queen, about to celebrate another milestone in living off the rest of us, has seen her personal wealth go up by £5 million to £370 million. Instead of cheering the rise in billionaires, we should be taxing their wealth.

But real justice requires doing away with a system that produces the super-rich.

Sam Ord

New billionaires every week

EVERY 30 hours during the Covid pandemic, one new billionaire was created while almost a million people were pushed into extreme poverty.

A new Oxfam brief, "Profiting from Pain" comes as the elite gather at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The brief outlines that the pandemic has created 40 new pharma billionaires. The rise comes from corporations like Moderna and Pfizer controlling the Covid vaccine despite public investment.

These corporations make almost £800 profit every second

partly by charging governments up to a 24 times markup.

Meanwhile 87 percent of people in low-income countries aren't fully vaccinated.

The wealth of the world's billionaires is now equivalent to 13.9 percent of global GDP.

Powerful The ten richest men now hoard more wealth than the bottom 40 percent.

A worker in the bottom 50 percent would have to work 112 years to earn the annual amount of someone in the top 1 percent.

"The extremely

rich and powerful are profiting from pain and suffering," said Gabriela Bucher, Executive Director of Oxfam International.

"Some have grown rich by denying billions of people access to vaccines, others by exploiting rising food and energy prices.

"They are paying out massive bonuses and dividends while paying as little tax as possible.

"This rising wealth and rising poverty are two sides of the same coin, proof that our economic system is functioning exactly how the rich and powerful designed it to do."

SocialistWorker WHAT WE THINK

NEW 'ACTION PLAN' WON'T CHANGE COPS' RACISM

THE POLICE assured us this week that they really, really are going to tackle their own racism. Their Race Action Plan is supposed to explain why, for example, black people are nine times more likely to be stopped and searched than white people, and five times more likely to have force used against them.

The 1999 Macpherson Report, written after the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, found that the Metropolitan Police was "institutionally racist".

But during a briefing with journalists the officers introducing this week's new scheme refused to say whether policing is institutionally racist. That means the new plan is already weaker than the findings from 23 years ago.

And there was plenty of other evidence this week of the true nature of the cops.

We learned that while spending time with friends, Olivia, a 14-year-old girl with autism and learning difficulties, was brutally strip-searched by police.

She was discovered to be in possession of a sharpened stick which she used to self-harm, her mother said. Officers then

handcuffed Olivia, before pinning her down, cutting her underwear and strip-searching her in the presence of male officers.

The child, who is mixed race, later tried to commit suicide after the terrifying ordeal.

Olivia later appeared in court accused of possession of a bladed weapon and was acquitted.

This new case comes after the strip-search of a black child, known as Child Q, at her school in east London.

More than 13,000 young people under the age of 18 have been strip-searched in England and Wales since 2017. Over two-thirds of children who have been strip-searched by the Met over

the past three years were from ethnically diverse backgrounds. And the cop who murdered Sarah Everard last March is set to appear in court over multiple counts of flashing this week.

Wayne Couzens is currently serving a life sentence for the kidnap, rape and murder of Everard.

The token measures in the Race Action Plan won't be enough because the racist rot is in-built. It flows from the police's job to hold up and protect a racist system.

Policing doesn't just reflect that system, it attracts those who enjoy implementing it and using the power it gives them.

As Sue Fish, the former chief of Nottinghamshire Police, admitted recently, a series of revelations

have shown "the toxic racist and sexist culture which is endemic in policing". And when they are not busy murdering women or assaulting children, the police help to defend a Downing Street that's corrupt to the core.

Then only effective police action plan is to abolish them.

Conference For The Black Child, Sat 11 June. Called by Stand Up To Racism and others. For details and to register go to bit.ly/ChildQ106

virus do so after contact with infected animals or their faeces. In part, that reflects the way humans are increasingly encroaching into wild areas.

The World Health Organisation says most of those infected will recover without treatment. But it can be more severe, especially in young children, pregnant women, and individuals who are immunocompromised.

The monkeypox virus primarily affects African men that have sex with men. It originates in tropical rainforest areas of west and central Africa where it is relatively common. The virus primarily transmits between humans through sex. It spreads mostly through close physical contact, and by contaminated clothes and bedding.

Suggesting that the virus primarily affects African men that have sex with men stigmatises them, making the disease harder to stop. It also creates a false sense of security for others.

Primarily affects African men that have sex with men stigmatises them, making the disease harder to stop. It also creates a false sense of security for others.

Our website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.



Sign up to our morning newsletter Breakfast in Red and get the latest news every day.

For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred



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struggles the mainstream won't report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

Is the global economy slipping out of control?

GLOBAL STOCK markets dropped like a stone last week. Often these gyrations don't represent anything significant. But now they reflect fears of a global economy slipping out of control.

Why is this happening? To start, there's the sharp rise in the rate of inflation. Its background is the economic recovery from the pandemic lockdowns.

The ruling classes on both sides of the Atlantic are afraid that falling unemployment and labour shortages in some sectors will allow workers to protect their living standards by pushing up wages. This would in turn push up prices, unleashing the dreaded wage-price spiral haunting the bosses' imagination.

This diagnosis has been demolished by the economic historian Adam Tooze. In the US in 2020-1 unit labour costs made a 7.9 percent contribution to price increases, non-labour costs 38.3 percent and corporate profits 53.9 percent.

This is a profit-led inflation, in which bosses have used the recovery to boost prices and profits.

Fossil-fuel producers have done especially well. The Financial Times last week reported that US shale companies are enjoying "a tsunami of cash"—£143 billion, thanks to the high oil and gas prices.

Tooze is sceptical that the inflationary surge will unleash a wage-price spiral. He said, "Trade union density is down across advanced economies. Profit mark-ups have risen over the last thirty years whilst the correlation between wage and price inflation... has declined to zero, or even fallen into negative territory."

What is dangerous about the inflation is the reaction of the central banks, who now play the main role in managing economies. They are pushing up interest rates.

The most important central bank, the US Federal Reserve Board, is quite open in hoping that the increases will drive up unemployment and undermine workers' attempts to defend real wages.

But there is a serious risk that if the central banks shove up interest rates too fast and too high, they will precipitate a recession. This is what happened when Paul Volcker, then Fed chair, imposed a brutal monetary squeeze to force down inflation in October 1979.

Dollar

The "Volcker shock" was transmitted globally by a sharp rise in the dollar. This is happening now—the dollar has appreciated by about 16 percent in the past 12 months.

As the economist Mohammed El-Erian points out, in the Global South "dollar appreciation translates into higher import prices, more costly external debt servicing and greater risk of financial instability. It puts further pressure on countries that are already stretched in resources and policy responses by the fight against the ravages of Covid."

"The concern is particularly acute for low-income countries hampered also by high food and energy inflation. A cost of living crisis here is also a threat of famine for the most vulnerable ones."

"If allowed to burn further, what I have called the 'little fires everywhere syndrome'... can merge into a bigger, more dangerous combination of damaged global growth, debt defaults, and social, political and geopolitical instability."

And then there is China, the second biggest economy in the world. President Xi Jinping's "Zero Covid" policy is cracking thanks to the spread of Omicron and its variants.

Widespread anti-vax sentiments among the elderly there mean that 52 million over 60s and 51 percent of over 80s haven't been fully vaccinated. When Omicron hit Hong Kong, there were over 9,000 deaths, mainly in the over 60s.

Hence the brutal and unpopular lockdown in the economic hub of Shanghai and the more limited lockdown in Beijing.

The negative impact on an economy already struggling with the bursting of a gigantic real estate bubble is becoming visible. In April retail sales fell by 11.1 percent and youth unemployment rose to a record 18.2 percent. And when the Chinese powerhouse slows, the rest of the world feels it.

Add in the impact of the Ukraine war in increasing energy and food prices and the prospect is pretty grim. Let's hope that Tooze is wrong and workers are able to flex their muscles.



BRITISH FOREIGN Secretary Liz Truss and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba

War escalates as Liz Truss calls to militarise Moldova

by CHARLIE KIMBER

FOREIGN SECRETARY Liz Truss has revealed that she wants to take another step into filling eastern Europe with weapons by arming Moldova.

Moldova, to the south west of Ukraine, is not a Nato member. But Truss wants to draw it into a dependent arrangement, and create another flashpoint with Russia.

In an interview with The Telegraph newspaper, Truss said, "I would want to see Moldova equipped to Nato standard."

"This is a discussion we're having with our allies."

If the plans are adopted, Nato will provide modern weaponry to Moldova, replacing its Soviet-era equipment, and train soldiers in how to use it.

The Telegraph notes, "The move would be a marked expansion of the UK's military support in the region and a further indication that it sees the invasion of Ukraine as a long-term turning point."

And in another major expansion of imperialist militarism in Europe, Sweden and Finland formally submitted their applications to join the Nato alliance last week.

Finland shares a 800 mile border with Russia.

Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said the move was a "historic step".

He is rejoicing at the opportunity to extend Nato's imperialist power under the guise of defending Ukrainians.

The greatest obstacle to membership could be Turkey's opposition.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has described Sweden and Finland as "incubators" for terrorist groups—by which he means the Kurdish groups fighting against Turkish oppression.

Erdogan will want some grubby payoff over arms

Nato's Jens Stoltenberg

Biden threatens war with China

US PRESIDENT Biden made another terrifying pledge on Monday, this time preparing for possible war with China.

He said he would use military force to defend Taiwan if it were ever regarded as having been attacked by China.

This abandons the "strategic ambiguity" traditionally favoured.

At a news conference with prime minister Fumio Kishida of Japan

during a visit to Tokyo, Biden suggested that he would be willing to go further on behalf of Taiwan than he has in helping Ukraine.

The White House quickly tried to deny that the president meant what he had said. But like Biden's "regime change in Russia" speech in March, he is revealing the desired aims of US policy.

and diplomatic support from the US and Nato before he agrees.

Meanwhile US president Joe Biden is reigniting one of the "forever wars" he pledged to end. It is another sign of the resurgence of imperialist militarism linked to the war in Ukraine.

On Monday he signed an order authorising the generals to again send hundreds of special operations forces to Somalia.

This reversed former president Donald Trump's move to withdraw nearly all ground troops from the east African country.

And Biden is backing it up with assassinations and death squads. He has approved a Pentagon request for authority to target about a dozen suspected leaders of the Al Shabaab group.

The New York Times comments, "Together, the decisions will revive an open-ended American counter-terrorism operation that has amounted to a slow-burn war through three administrations.

"The move stands in contrast to his decision last year to pull US forces from Afghanistan, saying, 'It is time to end the forever war'."



Inquiry into cops who ruined lives sees delay

The Spycops inquiry has seen police with fading memories and won't hold further public hearings until 2024 reports **Simon Baskettter**

WOMEN WHO were deceived into relationships with undercover cops will have to wait a further two years for the public inquiry to hold any further public hearings.

They described the delaying of this process as "beyond belief." The much delayed and now slow-moving inquiry is not due to question any further witnesses in public until spring 2024.

Police Spies out of Lives, the organisation that represents the women, said, "The idea that we have to wait until 2024 for the next tranche of hearings is beyond belief. Justice delayed is justice denied."

Set up originally in 2015, the inquiry is not expected to end before 2026. Sir John Mitting, the inquiry's chair, is looking at the conduct of 139 undercover officers who spied on more than 1,000 mainly left wing political groups.

The latest round questioned the senior managers who were responsible for supervising the undercover officers.

Many gave abrupt or vague answers or claimed that they could not recall events.

All claimed they did not know that the undercover officers they were supervising had formed sexual relationships with women during their covert deployments.

Training

They claimed not to remember each other or some of the officers working for them.

And, they also insisted there wasn't a training manual. But did agree there was a folder which, according to former DI Angus McIntosh was, "full of good advice for the new officers", though he added that he never looked at the contents himself.

Between 1976 and 1979, McIntosh was the deputy head of the Metropolitan police undercover unit, the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS).

BACK STORY

The public sessions of the Spy Cops inquiry have shown the extent of the state infiltration of left wing, trade union and campaign groups. But they are unlikely to bring about justice for the victims

- The current phase of the inquiry focuses on the years 1973 to 1982. It has identified at least 1,000 groups that were infiltrated by cops

At least 24 cops infiltrated the SWP during these years.

There was a police policy decision not to place undercover officers in fascist groups—but who made the policy and why was less clear.

McIntosh told the inquiry, "My recollection is that this was a high-level policy decision, and I certainly was too junior to be a part of this."

Geoffrey Craft, who led the SDS in 1976 and 1977, told the inquiry that police had "other sources in the far right".

Whether he was referring to informants or how many cops were already fascists is unclear.

Barry Moss, the head of the SDS during 1980, "There was probably a policy decision at that time not to deploy anyone into the far right because they were too violent, and we were concerned what the officer may have to do to prove his credentials."

The police justification for infiltrating the left has been that they were violent but consistency is not their strong point.

Moss blamed the left for causing disorder when they sought to prevent fascist marches.

He added, "If the National Front had just been allowed to demonstrate and the left wing hadn't turned up, there probably wouldn't have been any disorder."

PROTEST PLACARD highlighting the ongoing Spycops inquiry

Inquiry hears how the police fired CS spray at Sheku Bayoh

AN INQUIRY into the death of Sheku Bayoh after contact with the police has heard powerful testimony about the cops' actions.

Bayoh died in hospital in handcuffs in May 2015 in Kirkcaldy, Fife. He had multiple injuries after being hit with police batons, and being shackled and held on the ground by numerous officers.

His body was covered with over 24 separate lacerations, cuts, bruises, and he had a broken rib.

Bayoh's family believe he died from positional asphyxia because of the tactics used by police, who they allege over-reacted and were motivated by racial bias.

Following intense campaigning by his family and supporters, an inquiry into his death is being held in Edinburgh headed by Lord Bracadale, a senior judge.

One officer involved in Bayoh's arrest admitted on Thursday that police fired CS spray and pepper spray at him without warning, even though he made no direct threat and did not show any weapons.

PC Craig Walker was one of the first cops to confront Bayoh after police received calls from the public about a man with a knife on

the streets. No bladed weapon was ever found.

Walker said he considered running Bayoh over in a police vehicle when he arrived at the scene. Instead he shoulder-charged him to the ground after claiming he saw him chase a colleague, strike her to the ground and stamp on her.

Angela Grahame QC, counsel to the inquiry, questioned Walker about what happened when he and another officer, Alan Paton, first arrived.

The inquiry heard that Paton, who has yet to give evidence, told Bayoh to "get down on the fucking ground". And that, without warning him, sprayed CS gas towards Bayoh's face.

On Friday Walker said he had never come across any examples of racial discrimination at Kirkcaldy Police Office or heard racist jokes or comments.

Walker said that descriptions of Bayoh that fellow officers had used, such as "deranged with superhuman power," amounted to "perception". He also told the inquiry he was not aware of any negative stereotypes about black men in the criminal justice system.

Bayoh family QC Claire Mitchell

asked whether any of the following might be racist stereotypes. "I kept thinking about the Lee Rigby boy, the soldier who was killed".

"I cannot emphasise the strength of this guy". "He was massive and is the biggest male I have ever seen". "I've never seen a more frightening crazy man in my life. I could see he was completely out of control".

Walker admitted some of these were not accurate. Sheku Bayoh was 5 foot 10 inches tall. The first two police at the scene were both 6 foot 4 inches tall. One was 25 stone, twice Bayoh's weight.

Bayoh's family says he is "Scotland's George Floyd". Zahid Saeed, who had known Bayoh for nearly 15 years, said near the start of the inquiry that Bayoh was "murdered" by police officers.

Anti-racists, including Stand Up To Racism supporters and trade unionists, have gathered repeatedly in solidarity with the Bayoh family's call for justice outside the inquiry.

They were set to again on Tuesday this week, which could be the end of this phase of the inquiry. The inquiry continues, and solidarity events are important.

Charlie Kimber

New wave of protests and strikes shake Iran

Government moves to cut food subsidies have revived movement on the streets, says **Nick Clark**

THOUSANDS OF people have protested and struck in towns, cities and villages across Iran after the government hiked basic food prices.

Iranian security forces attacked some protests with teargas and live ammunition—reportedly killing six people.

Protests began after Iran's government announced last month that it would cut and end subsidies for wheat and flour, calling it “necessary economic surgery.”

The move caused prices to rise by up to 300 percent for some flour-based food staples such as bread and pasta, in a country where half of the 85 million population lives in poverty.

The government blamed the global wheat crisis sparked by the war in Ukraine. It's the latest blow against ordinary people in Iran's long-running economic crisis caused by US-imposed economic sanctions, and free market policies imposed by successive governments.

Ahmed Reza, a taxi driver who works ten hour days, told the Middle East Eye website, “This is not an economic surgery—it is called choking people. What kind of surgery is this that people can't even have cheap food?”

“Surgery usually makes people survive and feel great again. But the government's economic surgery is killing us.”

Sanctions

And Soroush, a delivery worker, said he had begun cutting out certain foods four years ago, after then-US president Donald Trump imposed sanctions.

“I have to eat lunch outside at noon because of my job. Until four years ago I was able to buy chicken or kebabs,” he said. But the sanctions “made me ignore chicken or kebab and purchase pasta or even cookies instead.”

“Right now I can't even have these as both pasta and cookie prices have skyrocketed. I don't know what the hell I should do.”

Thousands of people have taken part in protests for more than

BACK STORY

Protesters take to the streets after government slashes food subsidies, hitting the poorest people hardest

- Bread and pasta prices have risen by up to 300 percent
- Thousands of people have joined protests in western and central areas of Iran
- Economic protests have potential to become more political—and to demand radical change

two weeks, in mostly western and central provinces.

Protesters aimed their anger at the government led by conservative “hardliner” Ebrahim Raisi. They chanted, “Raisi should be ashamed and leave the country alone,” and “Down with rising food prices.”

Bus drivers also struck in the capital Tehran for several days from 15 May, demanding a 57 percent increase in salaries. They also demanded the city's mayor resign.

There have been a number of protest movements and strikes in Iran over poverty and the rising cost of living since 2018. Then, huge protests took on the government over poverty, unemployment and government corruption.

Now the government is worried there could be yet another major wave of resistance.

An unnamed Iranian sociologist told Middle East Eye, “People have no way except to rise up because they do not have enough income or savings. These protests are driven by economic hardship rather than political opposition. The protesters are hungry.”

“If we don't listen to the loud voice of the people now, and think that we can end these protests by imprisoning and detaining a few people, I must say it will be the fire under the ashes, and it will be ignited in another place and another situation.”

“When a society reaches the phase of explosion, no one will be able to control it.”

LABOUR LEADER Anthony Albanese celebrating victory in Australia last weekend

Australian Tories dumped, but no surge in votes for the Labour Party

by CHRIS BREEN in Australia

AUSTRALIA'S TORY government and prime minister Scott Morrison have been humiliated in an election result that has left the party in disarray.

The vote is a repudiation of the right wing Coalition's sexism, anti-trans bigotry, and failure over climate change and the cost of living.

Since the last election in 2019, Australia has seen record bushfires and floods, as the impact of climate change starts to hit.

Morrison poured money into new coal mines and gas fields and failed to announce any plan to meet the net zero by 2050 target he belatedly adopted.

Women turned against the Tories after a series of sexual assault scandals in parliament.

Labour now has enough seats to form a government but the result is not a decisive embrace of its agenda.

Labour's first preference vote actually fell by 0.5 percent to

its lowest level since 1934. It only managed to win because it gained transfer votes from minor parties and independents.

With the cost of living surging and inflation at 5.1 percent, Labour leader Anthony Albanese declared that he would “absolutely” support increasing the minimum wage to match inflation.

He then rowed back from this, refusing to say whether it would put a figure on its recommendation to the industrial relations court.

Albanese says wages should rise but offers no way to achieve this.

Background

He made much of his background growing up in public housing. But his plan to build 30,000 new public houses in five years is a drop in the ocean compared to what is needed.

Labour agreed with the Coalition on its sabre-rattling at China, and had only marginal differences on refugees.

It is promising a higher climate

target than the Coalition, but this is still lower than what even big business is supporting.

That failure helped the Greens get their highest ever vote at 12 percent, winning three lower house seats.

The Tory vote also fractured. They shifted too far right for some middle class voters who wanted action on corruption, climate, women's rights and less cruelty to refugees.

Some of the anger at the election also went to the far right, with the United Australia Party getting over four percent, and Pauline Hanson's racist One Nation almost five percent.

In some working class Labour seats in Melbourne the right capitalised on anger over Covid lockdowns.

The end of the Tories is welcome news, but Labour isn't promising serious change. To kick out the Coalition's policies we need more struggle.

Chris Breen is a member of the Australian socialist organisation Solidarity. A longer version of this article is at socialistworker.co.uk

Rahman's victory

NIGEL FARAGE has invoked the idea of vote rigging by postal ballot to challenge the validity of the election of Lutfur Rahman as Tower Hamlets' mayor.

It is true that postal voting has made vote rigging easier by effectively undermining the secrecy of the ballot. But it suits Labour and the Tories as it makes it easier for them to harvest their core votes with a much-reduced number of activists.

There is no evidence there was any vote-rigging. Rahman won because of the attacks on the council workforce and Labour's cuts to council services.

Resentment in the borough has become focussed on local traffic neighbourhoods which have led to unpopular road closures. This enabled Rahman to build support across ethnically diverse working class communities, according to his Tory opponents.

But there is another important factor. In 2018 Labour easily won the election despite having credible opponents of Bangladeshi heritage.

The difference is that in 2018 Jeremy Corbyn led Labour. He had a history of support for the Palestinian people and opposition to war on Muslim countries.

In 2022 Keir Starmer leads Labour. He has witch-hunted out critics of the state of Israel. And he has introduced a loyalty pledge to Nato, which invaded Afghanistan and bombed Libya.

Not surprisingly, many Muslim people in Tower Hamlets have concluded that Labour is not on their side.

Rob Hoveman
 West Yorkshire

A tale of two flags—and one Palestinian city

WHEN ISRAELI forces attacked the funeral of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in Jerusalem, one of their aims was to seize Palestinian flags.

Israeli authorities summoned Shireen's brother and told him to instruct mourners not to carry Palestinian flags.

After beating pallbearers carrying her coffin draped in a flag, cops then broke the window of her hearse to snatch it. Just a week later,



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Just a thought...

Britain First's nods to Nazis

THE LEAFLET for the Nazi Britain First's candidate in the recent council election in Salford refers to Labour and the Tories as the "Old Gang politicians".

This is the exact term that Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s always used.

This is surely a conscious and deliberate echo of Nazis of the past.

Raphael Pigott
 By email

Why can't we fire Johnson?

IN 1991 we managed to oust Margaret Thatcher by taking to the street.

In doing that we showed the rest of her government that we no longer wanted her.

It happened then why can't it happen now?

Thomas Ness
 On Facebook

What to do with statues?

GOOD POINTS about why slaver Robert Geffrye's statue in east London has to go (Socialist Worker 11 May). But they are still putting up statues to celebrate others who don't deserve to be honoured.

Look at the statue to Margaret Thatcher in Grantham. A waste of money.

The fact we are still doing this archaic form of worship is obscene and backward.

Neil Jackson
 On Facebook

LEAVE statues where they are and put an informative plaque up instead. You can't change history—just learn from it.

Sarah McBride
 On Facebook

BUT HISTORY IS constantly changing. We research and learn, then we update and revise our theories.

Marie-Louise Faulds
 On Facebook

PUT ALL these statues in a museum—specifically, an underwater one.

You could charge divers to have a look and it would make a decent artificial reef for the fish.

Mark Sohn
 On Facebook

Cuts and short staffing have pushed A&Es into chaos

MY 83-YEAR-OLD mother waited eight hours at A&E the other week after a fall. The broken state of the NHS after a decade of cuts and a couple of years of pandemic was a shock to me. The most galling thing was the exhaustion on the faces of all the staff.

We arrived just after 8:50pm on a weekday and the room was packed. There were three queues. The first, snaking between rows of seating, was simply to register that you had arrived.

If you weren't lucky enough to have a friend or relative you had to stand in line, however ill you were.

Or you would hope the overstretched security guard or another patient would save your place. It was so crowded that staff

tried to introduce a "one companion per patient" rule. Imagine how this went down with parents. The security guard said he couldn't enforce it.

After 45 minutes we got to register, then sat in the second queue to speak to a second admin staff member. I overheard one say to her colleague, "You think this is bad, on my last shift there was a queue of ambulances outside right down the back".

Now we joined the third queue, waiting for a triage nurse. Each time a consulting room door opened several people would rush up to ask when they would be seen.

Eventually the loud speaker asked for them to stop. Chairs were marked for social distancing, but

the room was far too crowded. We waited another hour.

The nurse said my mother needed a doctor. So we joined a fourth queue. Someone else waiting asked me why the staff were so rude, but given the circumstances they seemed incredibly tolerant.

For people who arrived by car, the car park charged while you waited. My mum was eventually cleared after 5am.

I spoke to a friend who had a similar experience recently and had an even longer wait.

There is a strength in the resilience of the staff and patients. But outside hospitals we need to rage at what is being done.

Ken Olende
 East London

POSTAL workers, members of the CWU union, look set to ballot for strikes for an above inflation pay rise.

The CWU's strength lies in its workplace reps who are organising gate meetings. The CWU has tried to coordinate action among other unions, with limited success. Anti-union laws limit the TUC union grouping to demonstrations and lobbying.

On the ground there is a different story. University and college workers have fought over pensions, pay,

CWU members are gearing up

equality and workload. Rail workers have had a perpetual struggle in the privatised rail sector. Bus drivers have had some success in securing pay awards. Truck drivers have

had substantial pay rises.

Yet the sacking at P&O ferries shows how employers can break the law with impunity. Meanwhile unions that breach anti-union laws can be bankrupted through sequestration, and their leaders even jailed.

Without elected representatives in government dedicated to the cause of labour it falls on workers to defend what we have.

Tam Dewar
 CWU divisional rep Scotland (personal capacity)

FILL THE STREETS WITH RAGE AT THE TORIES

Workers, activists, trade unionists and refugee campaigners told **Sarah Bates** why they will build and attend the Trade Union Congress demo on 18 June—and why you should too

WORKERS NEED to demand better. Better than the cost of living crisis, murderous pandemic response, and soaring inflation rates. Better than privatisation, benefit cuts, racist immigration policies and runaway climate change.

to fight back," said Paul. "Workers have to fight back because no one else will do it for us."

After two years of presiding over

a disastrous response to Covid-19,

Boris Johnson is now overseeing a

government that's pushing down even

harder on ordinary people.

Johnson personally lied, cheated and

parted his way through the catastrophe.

The upcoming protest is set to be the

biggest mobilisation against his rotten

rule for a long time and is a key point

to apply pressure on an already weak

government.

But it's more than simply a num-

bers game. Collectively standing up for

ourselves helps break down the misery

we experience under capitalism.

On protests ordinary people can feel

strong, if only for a few hours. Important

national strike ballots are coming in sev-

eral unions, and there is a potential for

local action as well. The demo has to be

a launchpad for strikes.

The level of fightback proposed by

trade union leaders and Labour Party

leadership offers no serious resistance

to the attacks by the Tories and

bosses. And in some cases, like

the betrayal by UCU university

workers' union leadership, they

actively get in the way of effec-

tive action.

Workers' action has to extend

beyond marching after 18

June—and the

bigger and bolder

it is the better.

"We've paid the minimum

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So we've decided

that enough

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Paul Hancox

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And better than the government

handing the police yet more repressive

powers and pushing through legislation

targeting protesters.

That's the rallying cry from activists

who are organising to bring out huge

numbers of people to the Trade Union

Congress "We Demand Better" demon-

stration on 18 June.

It's not the first sign of a growing

sense of anger. Local disputes, includ-

ing some unofficial strikes, are winning

important victories.

Leading

Refuse workers in several areas across

Britain are leading the charge against

bullying management, pay cuts and

crushing workloads.

Striker Paul Hancox is a refuse

driver and Unite union rep in Rugby.

He told Socialist Worker the protest

was an important opportunity to

build our forces for the battles in the

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"Attending the TUC demon-

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party meetings

Stuff the royal jubilee—why socialists oppose the monarchy

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

914-9548-1031

BRISTOL

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

688-397-3148

COVENTRY

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

823-945-1917

CREWE & STOKE-ON-TRENT

Wed 1 June, 7pm

Royal Voluntary Service, 29 Charles Street, ST1 3JP
838-816-0773

HASTINGS

Thu 2 June, 7pm

The White Rock Hotel, 1-10 White Rock, TN34 1JU
850-8432-9959

HOME COUNTIES

Thu 2 June, 6.30pm

8341-170-103

LONDON: SOUTH

Wed 1 June, 7pm

Vida Walsh Centre, 2B Saltoun Rd, SW2 1EP
497-196-1801

PORTSMOUTH

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

Somerstown Community Centre, Winston Churchill Ave, PO5 4JJ
488-934-2809

SWANSEA & WEST WALES

Wed 1 June, 7pm

Brynmill Community Centre, St Alban's Rd, Brynmill, SA2 0BP
902-964-963

YORK & SCARBOROUGH

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

827-489-7492

CARDIFF**The revolutionary ideas of Angela Davis**

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

Mackintosh Residents Community Centre, Kepoch St, CF24 3JW
630-181-4857

EAST MIDLANDS**Roe v Wade—how do we defend abortion rights?**

Wed 1 June, 7pm

868-9106-9359

EDINBURGH**From WW1 to Vietnam—how people power ended war**

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

868-9106-9359

HARLOW**Know your enemy—what fascism is and how to fight it**

Thu 2 June, 7.30pm

832-8746-7480

HUDDERSFIELD**Is nuclear power a green option?**

Wed 1 June, 6.30pm

290 168 1804

KENT**Trans rights now—unity and liberation**

Thu 2 June,

8.15pm

434-623-8064

LONDON: NEWHAM**The cost of living crisis—how do we make the bosses pay?**

Wed 1 June, 7pm

Stratford Advice Arcade, 107-109 The Grove, E15 1HP
288-098-8827

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST**Why is the right attacking net zero—how can we get a sustainable economy?**

Wed 1 June, 7.30pm

543-023-057

MANCHESTER**Pamphlet launch: The Shadow of Stalin**

Wed 1 June, 7pm

Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount St, M2 5NS
323-178-7151

NEWCASTLE**Is human nature a barrier to socialism?**

Wed 1 June,

7pm

368-595-2712

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND**From porn in parliament to spiking—why does sexism run so deep?**

Wed 1 June,

7.30pm

894-2628-7708

NORWICH**Know your enemy—what fascism is and how to fight it**

Wed 1 June,

7.30pm

Butterfly Cafe, 114A King St, NR1 1QE
906-652-5299

OXFORD & THAMES VALLEY**Roe v Wade—how do we defend abortion rights?**

Wed 1 June,

7pm

861-2001-6477



The Socialist Workers Party continues to hold mostly online meetings during the pandemic. This ensures that there can still be collective and safe discussion, organising and actions. Branches may also hold in-person meetings with precautions taken for a safe environment. Most of these also have online access.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and just before the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings

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A different—if slightly twee—take on young adult humour

There's a familiar concept at the heart of odd couple buddy comedy *Big Boys*—but its new look at masculinity gives it a twist, writes **Nick Clark**

CHANNEL 4 says its new comedy *Big Boys* is a silly, sweet comedy about two boys from very different ends of the “spectrum of masculinity”.

Jack and Danny are thrown together at freshers' week in 2013 when, somewhat implausibly, their university houses them together in a shed rather than a hall of residence.

Jack, a sheltered 19 year old from Watford, is trying to overcome his dad's death, and grappling with how to come out as gay.

Meanwhile Danny, at 25, is a few years older than everyone else and seems a stereotypical lads' lad who “looks like a contestant from *Take Me Out*.”

Obviously they become best friends. But don't expect the antagonistic odd-couple humour of, say *Peep Show*, or the dated laddishness of *The Inbetweeners*.

Heart

Instead there's a lot of heart and a few touching moments. But writer Jack Cooke leaves little room for over-sentimentality, skilfully and immediately turning the saddest moments into jokes.

In the first ten minutes, grief, joy, loneliness, silliness, depression, vulnerability and three separate wanking jokes all weave into each other with the same comical tone.

There's not quite so much depth to the rest of the supporting characters, at least in the first episode.

There's an array of the usual university stereotypes, even though the campus feels too quiet and underpopulated for a freshers' week.

Most of them bear some resemblance to someone you've probably met in real life, some more convincing than others.

Enthusiasm

The overbearing Jules, with her try-hard, compulsive enthusiasm, is perhaps most convincing as every “student ambassador” who loved university so much they got a job there and never left.

It's all a little twee and sickly sweet.

But it does allow for Danny to be refreshing, different, and an interesting take on the British lad.

He's loud and likes to drink. But he's also vulnerable, empathetic and kind.

It also feels like there's a lot more development of his character to come, which, if you enjoy it, is probably the main reason to keep watching.

Big Boys starts Thursday 26 May, 10pm on Channel 4 and then on All 4



STANDARD COSTUME drama fare—or something deeper?

A film to challenge sentimental history

FILM

THE ROAD DANCE

In cinemas now

THE ROAD Dance explores the often unrecorded history of women's struggle and community conflict in rural Scotland.

Images of the lush and desolate highland landscape contrast with a tragic drama and the brutality of a dark secret to create an evocative story.

The script plays to the viewers expectations. The story of Kirsty, village sweetheart and

her betrothed Murdo, opens the film. It feels like simply another period romance flick, only to take a harrowing and complicated turn.

The Road Dance addresses what is so often left out of our idyllic fantasies about historical country life.

It reveals the cruel silence that many women were forced into for fear of rejection or persecution, and why so many decided to leave the crofts for the promise of the new world.

Against the backdrop of the First World War, and the impact of accelerated progress on

isolated life, this is a realistic rewrite of nostalgic, shortbread tin Scots identity.

But it is also a many layered understanding of the kind of tight knit community that has been lost.

Despite the gentle sentimentality, the film has an outdated air, as well as stilted emotionality that sometimes pulls the film towards melodrama.

But, for all that, The Road Dance offers a critical and touching story of pastoral life, that rewrites our expectations.

Lola Bhlaire

RADIO

BLACK ROOTS

Tuesdays, 11:30am, BBC Radio 4. First episode available now on BBC iPlayer

STRING BANDS, hoedowns, square dances, old-time fiddle and banjo styles, were a dominant strand in African American roots music from the 17th century onwards.

Despite this, many people think that such music comes solely from dungaree-wearing, white rural folk. Country might appear to be the whitest of all music genres, but it has some surprising roots.

How have these black roots been whitewashed from the history of American folk and country music? How have folk and country been positioned as white genres? What does black Americana sound like today?

In the first of three episodes, acclaimed musician Rhiannon Giddens returns to her home state of North Carolina to explore the lives of two black fiddlers.



Rhiannon Giddens

Frank Johnson was one of the first black celebrities in the Southern US states.

Born into slavery, he bought freedom for himself and his family on the back of his profits as a musician.

More than 2,000 people processed through Wilmington, North Carolina for his funeral in 1871.

Though he died before the start of the recording industry, his music was passed down through generations of black fiddlers in the region. The last of these fiddlers was Joe Thompson, who taught Rhiannon countless songs.

In the following episodes, she looks at how the “father of bluegrass” Bill Monroe acknowledged the black fiddler and guitarist Arnold Shultz as one of his major influences.

She explores how black musicians like Shultz were often mentors to white country stars of the time.

And she uncovers the story of one of the biggest stars of the early country era—the African American “Harmonica Wizard” DeFord Bailey.

SW: PEOPLE are very concerned about the Tories handing the police more powers. But the book shows this is nothing new. Tell us about the secret police tactics manual from the 1980s.

MATT FOOT: After the Brixton riots of 1981, Lord Scarman's review encouraged more liberal community policing. Scarman's report received the public support of Margaret Thatcher's government including home secretary, William Whitelaw.

However, secretly behind the scenes, Whitelaw's Home Office instigated and implemented a police manual for public order that gave the police paramilitary powers.

Published in 1983 it was available only to senior police officers. The private sanctioning of the manual meant the line between police operational independence and government had been crossed.

Parliament had no idea it existed or this shift had occurred. Yet "operational independence of the police" has since been repeated by successive home secretaries.

Six months after the manual's creation the secret powers were first deployed at Warrington during a printworkers' dispute. This involved new police formations to split the protest, snatch squad arrests and police in Range Rovers chasing pickets in the dark across waste land.

Such tactics were as shocking as they were a surprise to the trade unions involved.

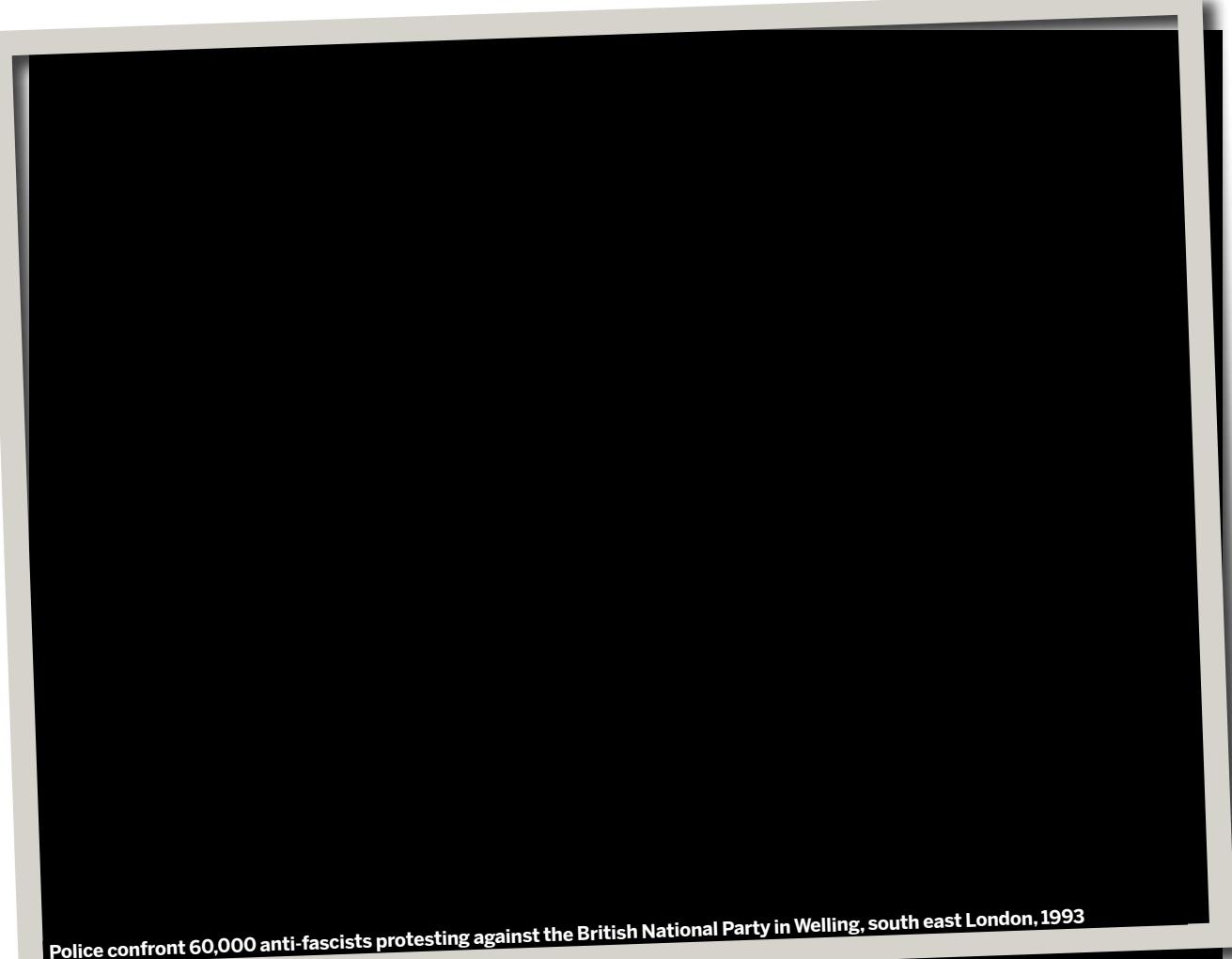
Colin Bourne, the National Union of Journalists organiser, remembered, "They drove at high speed at us, lights on full, I ran like hell. I didn't think the vehicles would follow, it was terrorism. It was designed to terrify those people who were there. It could have had no other purpose."

The manual first came to light during the 1985 trial of miners for rioting following the Battle of Orgreave in June 1984. It was one of the most violent days of a year-long strike.

The police could now use short shields and batons together and at Orgreave they did. The new tactics sanctioned police to "incapacitate" protesters, apparently just for being there. From then on tactics were developed and others introduced.

A number from the original manual—horse charges, dogs and shields with truncheons—are still deployed today.

During the Miners' Strike the government encouraged



Police confront 60,000 anti-fascists protesting against the British National Party in Welling, south east London, 1993

SPYCOPS, POLICE BRUTALITY AND RESISTANCE

Charlie Kimber interviews Matt Foot, a criminal defence solicitor and an author of a new book Charged: How the Police Try to Suppress Protest

increased criminal charges, and 95 miners at Orgreave were charged with rioting. They had gone from jobs for life to facing a life sentence.

Their trial collapsed when the police evidence was deemed "unreliable". The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign are fighting to this day for an inquiry to uncover the truth for the victims.

Solicitor Gareth Peirce made a prophecy after the treatment of miners at Orgreave about the future impact of these secret rules. She said, "It is probable that by next year Parliament will

have abolished any absolute right to peaceful assembly in this country." Charged shows how that prophecy played out up until the present day with the Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter protests.

SW: What have you uncovered about the policing of the 1993 Welling anti-racist protests and the Stephen Lawrence campaign?

MF: Around 60,000 people attended Welling on 16 October 1993 to demand the closure of the fascist British

"The police get away with it because they promote their own narrative

Margaret Thatcher's home secretary, William Whitelaw

National Party "bookshop" following racist killings that had taken place in the area, including Stephen Lawrence.

It was one of the biggest anti-racist protests in British history. There was violence, which the police blamed on the organisers.

Looking through the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report and other material that has come available since, it is now possible to see more clearly who bears the responsibility.

The three senior officers in charge of the protest were the very same officers in charge of overseeing the Stephen Lawrence investigation and covered up police failures.

When Paul Condon became Met Commissioner in February 1993 he announced a "more caring and courteous" police force and a drive to raise ethical standards. A week after the Welling demonstration he visited his secret Special Demonstration Squad, or Spycops, and gave each a bottle of whisky as a thank you for the apparent accuracy of their intelligence.

One Spycop later claimed he was asked to spy on the Lawrence family, something the Met denies.

SW: Did Blair's Labour government make any difference as to how protest was policed?

MF: There was tremendous hope when Tony Blair came to power in 1997. The Tories had won the previous four general elections. The Criminal Justice Bill 1994 introduced a swathe of powers to the police.

Despite Labour abstaining on the Bill when Blair was home secretary, people thought he would reverse these increased powers when in office. Not only was nothing overturned, Blair's government gave the police yet further powers, introducing a new criminal law for every day he was in office.

By the end of his time in office the Tories even saw the opportunity to promote a more liberal agenda on civil liberties than Labour.

Another young barrister at the time, Keir Starmer, criticised Labour in measured terms. He contributed to a lengthy academic paper that complained of Labour's abstention on the bill for "strategic considerations".

Sadly the ex human rights barrister, now leader of the Labour Party, seems to be ploughing the same furrow as Blair.

As the Spycops (Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill) bill went through parliament, Starmer's Labour Party abstained.

On the Police Bill, Labour planned to abstain until its hand was forced following the outcry over the policing of the vigil in memory of Sarah Everard.

SW: HOW have the police got away with it?

MF: The police "get away with it" because they promote their own narrative over that of what protesters experience.

The police have not acted alone. There has been consistent support from people outside their ranks—big business, the media, the judiciary and the civil service.

Together, often in the background, this state assistance enables the police to either carry out or cover up the use of excessive force seen during protest.

On one occasion the Crown Prosecution Service did charge a large number of officers for their behaviour following a mass protest at Wapping in 1987.

The protest was to defend the jobs of print union members who had been sacked by Rupert Murdoch's News International.

The Met Commissioner Peter Imbert responded with a private visit to home secretary, Douglas Hurd, to pressure him to drop the charges.

The cases collapsed after a district judge—who had known the home secretary at Cambridge University—dropped the initial charges, subsequently the remaining cases collapsed.

SW: WHAT relevance has the book today as Patel continues to bring in draconian police powers against protest, and can this be stopped?

MF: The Police Act 2022 provides the police with enormous discretion against protesters. The police can now limit how long a protest can

Extinction Rebellion protester is dragged away by cops (above)

be and outlaw noisy dissent. They are the arbiter on deciding what protests cause significant annoyance, and can act accordingly.

None of the rights we now take for granted, such as the vote were achieved through part time silent demonstration.

The suffragettes were often radical in their approach—something rarely mentioned by MPs when they celebrate their achievements.

Despite the attempts to remove our right to protest, there remains an appetite for dissent.

Extinction Rebellion and school walkouts have firmly pushed climate change up the agenda. Black Lives Matter brought into general consciousness the notion that history is often presented through a prism and how much we still need to do as a country to address racism.

The poll tax was finished after an enormous 200,000 protest in Trafalgar Square. The Labour Party did not support that protest but nevertheless enormous public opposition turned out and won.

Such a sharp turnaround in attitudes is difficult for the right to explain. They argue human morality is a static affair, fixed by human nature. It is also a challenge to conventional liberalism.

When people fight for change they often question their older assumptions about society.

That is why you frequently hear new activists asking, why are the police against us, why does the media lie, and how do we change people's minds?

Both approaches fail to explain to reclaim, nurture, protect and rebuild this long established right.

The best way to defend the right to protest is to protest.

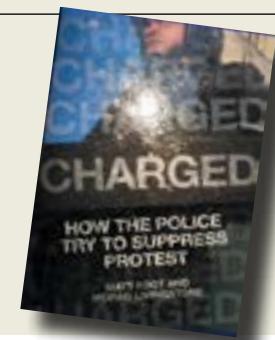
READ MORE

Matt Foot is a criminal defence solicitor. Morag Livingstone is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and author.

Matt Foot and Morag Livingstone will speak about the book at the Marxism 2022 festival socialistworker.co.uk/marxismfestival/

Charged: How the Police Try to Suppress Protest by Matt Foot and Morag Livingstone

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FOCUS ON HOMOPHOBIA

How do ideas and attitudes change?

Attitudes to LGBT+ people have changed over the past few decades. **Yuri Prasad** looks at how struggle can change ideas in society

IT IS an encouraging sign of change that when footballer Jake Daniels recently came out as gay, the reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

What a difference to the deep hostility that greeted fellow player Justin Fashanu when he came out in 1990.

But football is well behind the wider changes in society.

According to a British Social Attitudes survey that year, 58 percent of people thought same-sex relationships were "always wrong".

By the time of the latest survey in 2016, 64 percent of people said same-sex relationships are "not wrong at all".

Such a sharp turnaround in attitudes is difficult for the right to explain. They argue human morality is a static affair, fixed by human nature. It is also a challenge to conventional liberalism.

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That is why you frequently hear new activists asking, why are the police against us, why does the media lie, and how do we change people's minds?

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The best way to defend the right to protest is to protest.

in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."

Examples of this come from the 1980s. The right had created a toxic environment for LGBT+ people, labelling the HIV/Aids epidemic a "gay plague".

They followed that with Section 28 legislation that banned the "promotion of homosexuality" in schools.

It provoked an increase in homophobia—but also resistance.

In the most difficult circumstances LGBT+ people demonstrated, organised and confronted the politicians, the media and the clerics.

Protests against Section 28 led to the forming of groups such as Stonewall.

The labour movement also began to embrace LGBT+ liberation. The Great Miners' Strike received support from LGBT+ groups.

South Wales miners took the issue of equality into their NUM union, the TUC and the Labour Party—and won.

Peter Purton, in his book Champions of Equality, says that the Great Miners' Strike was crucial.

By the mid-1990s all significant trade unions in Britain had passed policy in favour of LGBT+ rights.

It meant there were now bodies representing millions of working people that stood in opposition to oppression.

This subsequently forced the state into a series of grudging reforms.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas

IN BRIEF

Co-op drivers to deliver pay strikes

DRIVERS AND transport clerks working for logistics giant GXO, on the outsourced Co-op supermarket delivery contract, are set to strike over pay.

Over 330 workers in the Unite union based at the company's depot in Elton Head Road, St Helens, Merseyside are involved in the dispute. They voted 97 percent vote in favour of action.

The union has notified 40 strike days, beginning with a 48-hour strike next Tuesday.

The drivers deliver to 466 Co-op stores spreading from the Lake District and Leeds in the north, as far south as Hereford and Aberystwyth in west Wales.

Unite union could join Dundee fight

UNITE UNION members could join the fight over pensions at the University of Dundee. Over 100 workers began a strike ballot this week, with action planned for the start of the new academic year in September.

University bosses want to close the Defined Benefits Pension Scheme to grades one to six and replace it with a worse system dependent on stock market gyrations.

Unison union members have already held a series of strikes over the issue.

Post Office walkout over paltry pay offer

POST OFFICE counters workers are set to walkout on Saturday of next week over pay. Supply chain and admin workers will down tools on Monday 6 June.

This is the second set of nationwide strikes by the CWU union members.

"The latest offer is for a 2.5 percent rise with effect from 1 April 2022, plus a £500 lump sum," said CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey.

"Not only is this way below the April 2022 RPI inflation figure of 11.1 percent.

"It also offers absolutely no back pay for whole 2021-22 period—for which the Post Office is imposing a pay freeze."

Protest against hard right Tory MP

AROUND 50 local campaigners came together in Broadstairs, Kent, last Saturday for a cost of living protest outside the constituency office of Tory MP Craig Mackinlay.

It was called by Thanet Left and supported by Kent Climate Action Coalition.

Mackinlay is opposed to a windfall tax on the gas and oil companies' profits and is also the leader of the Net Zero Scrutiny Group of Tory MPs. It opposes effective climate action.

Steve Wilkins

ENTERTAINMENT VENUE WORKERS



CLEANERS and porters in the Caiwu union who are outsourced to DOC Cleaning protested last week over pay and working conditions at London's Royal Opera House PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

PCS UNION CONFERENCE

Delegates debate pay fight and Ukraine war

by NICK CLARK in Brighton

CIVIL SERVICE workers planned to debate a coming pay fight—as well as their position on the Ukraine war—at the PCS union conference this week.

Delegates at the conference were set to debate two motions on Ukraine as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday afternoon.

One, supported by the union's leadership, condemns Russia's invasion of Ukraine and "opposes the involvement of competing powers".

Another, backed by Socialist Worker supporters, also condemns Russia's invasion.

But it goes further to explicitly oppose the involvement of the West's Nato military alliance.

The union's leadership looked set to oppose it.

Delegates at the conference were also expected to vote for a motion calling a national strike ballot over pay, in a debate on Tuesday afternoon.

And the conference comes two weeks after the government announced

plans to cut 91,000 civil service jobs. Workers at the union's Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) group conference on Monday debated their response to a raft of office closures announced earlier this year.

DWP bosses want to close 41 offices, putting some 1,000 jobs at risk.

They passed a motion to campaign to "build for an industrial campaign, ensuring members are engaged and ready to take action."

It also committed to "build the confidence that offices and jobs can be saved".

Measures

Another motion proposed a strike ballot of all the PCS's members in the DWP. It accused the leadership of trying to "dissipate the mood".

Katrine Williams from DWP South East Wales branch said, "We need a confident, strong, group wide mobilisation of our members."

The group's leadership opposed the motion, arguing that there wasn't enough support for action in every DWP workplace. Ian

Bartholomew from the group executive committee said, "We recognise the most effective way to defend jobs, offices and services is with a strong group-wide campaign, while supporting those branches willing to do more locally."

But, he added, "Members in some sites wanted to campaign, but in others much more is needed to be done to get anything off the ground."

"In addition, we've just come out of a consultative ballot where 56 percent of DWP members didn't vote.

"And we're sat on a membership density of 52 percent."

"This is by no means a basis on which to launch headlong into a ballot of all members."

In the debate, Tim Nicholls from DWP Dorset branch argued that the discussion should be on how to build support for action.

He said the union needs action to "excoriate this government" and "bring the members with us."

"They need to be convinced that we can win this and we can rip the government's gullets out."

TRANSPORT



Workers build support for the tube strike at Green Park station

Walkout across London Underground on 6 June

WORKERS ACROSS London Underground stations

are set to walk out on Monday 6 June against 600 job cuts and new ways of working. The RMT union told members that new structures would "impose flexible working across the tube network and would result in an intolerable burden on you and your colleagues".

It says the demands are "no job losses, pension losses, or changes to agreements."

The action is set to involve all station and revenue grades and could have a big impact.

WORKERS AT EUSTON AND GREEN PARK underground stations in central London will walk out Friday of next week against what they say is a bullying manager.

The RMT union members' action will hit the closest

station to Buckingham Palace during the queen's Jubilee weekend celebrations.

Workers say they have suffered years of intimidation, bullying and unjust sackings by a manager who has created a toxic atmosphere. Union members have been building support for the strike to ensure every worker walks out and joins the picket line.

TRAIN CONDUCTORS employed by TransPennine Express in England are keeping up their fight over pay.

Around 270 RMT union members have held a series of strikes since 13 February—and the wave of action will continue until 4 June, hitting the Jubilee weekend.

They voted by 85 percent to strike for an end to the pay gap between them and workers at other companies.

ENGINEERS



PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

ENGINEERING WORKERS on the London to Southend C2C train line are striking over pay and conditions. The Unite union members, pictured in east London, walked out between Monday and Friday of last week and this Monday. They were set for further action on Friday and Monday of next week and Friday 3 June.

SCHOOLS

East London school strike over 'cost-cutting' bosses

TEACHERS AND support staff at Drapers' Pyrgo Priory School in Harold Hill, east London, began a two-day strike over cuts on Tuesday.

The NEU union members struck on Tuesday of last week—and plan a three-day walkout from 7 June.

The school is run by Drapers' multi-academy

trust. NEU district secretary John Delaney said works face "a cruel proposal at a time of rising inflation and extra living costs".

"Reducing hours and pay grades at this time is socially irresponsible and a kick in the teeth for the staff who kept the school running during the pandemic."

BIN WORKERS

Strikers refuse to back down on pay

REFUSE WORKERS in Rugby, Warwickshire, will continue their walkout after the council offered them a poor pay offer.

The council offered to raise drivers' maximum annual wage from £23,400 to £30,940 and street cleaners from £19,200 to £24,587.

Workers are still angry that, despite these increases, they still will remain some of the

lowest paid in the area.

Meanwhile, refuse workers for Wealden council, Sussex, are continuing strikes until 11 June after more than three weeks on the picket line.

The GMB union members, who are outsourced to Biffa, are battling for better pay.

Dave Lennon, GMB union rep, told Socialist Worker, "I'm on £9.50 an hour at the

moment, the minimum wage, and if we got £12.50 it would help with the cost of living. He called for "solidarity and support, because we're all in it together".

Meanwhile, rubbish could pile up at the Isle of Wight festival as refuse workers ballot for strikes. It closes on 27 May, meaning strikes could begin as early as 13 June.

UNIVERSITIES

It's time for a revolt against UCU leaders

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THE EXTENT of the betrayals by general secretary Jo Grady and the leadership of the UCU union became clear this week.

The union leadership called a meeting of the 40 branches that had a mandate to strike and launch a marking and assessment boycott from Monday.

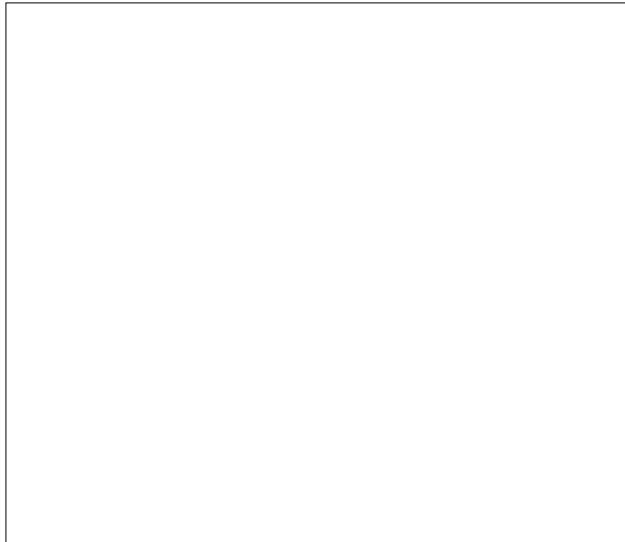
It asked the membership whether they would be prepared to strike in June—which isn't term time for most universities.

Workers had wanted to begin the strikes and boycotts earlier—as had been democratically agreed—and then take further action in September.

The leadership took this to mean that the marking and assessment boycott should be called off.

In total 18 branches will now not take part in the marking boycott.

After a *Guardian* newspaper article said that branches were dropping out of the action, Edinburgh UCU wrote on Twitter. It said the branch “has not pulled out of the boycott, merely paused due



UCU MEMBERS on strike at Richmond College this week

to where we are currently in the academic calendar. We are still very much committed to action and to winning these disputes.”

The problem for many branches is that the marking boycott has come way too late to have any real impact.

The fact that 20 branches still want to go ahead with the boycott shows workers are still committed to this dispute. Activists are fighting to twin branches taking

action with those that aren't, and to prepare for further action over pay, pensions, and equality in the future.

But throughout this dispute, Grady and her supporters have done everything to confuse, misdirect and delay the members.

Further attacks are coming thick and fast from university bosses and the Tories. These are only encouraged by the union leaders' retreats.

Around half of academic

staff at the **University of Roehampton** face losing their jobs.

Bosses at the south London university have threatened over 220 posts.

They sent an email to workers in the creative arts, education, humanities, life sciences, and psychology departments last week saying their jobs would be at risk.

Linda Cronin, Roehampton UCU union branch chair, described the cuts as the “P&O of education”—a reference to ferry bosses sacking 800 workers in March.

“Workers are furious about this attack,” she told Socialist Worker. “The university's restructuring plans will mean that staff will be asked to reapply for the same jobs, others will find they will have a different job description.”

At **De Montfort university** in Leicester, management plans to cut 58 roles for professional services, teaching and professorial staff under the guise of the coronavirus crisis.

At **Wolverhampton university** in the West Midlands, the bosses announced that they would no longer recruit students to 138 courses for at least a year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Step up pressure to win in Coventry bins battle

by A UNITE MEMBER

FORMAL TALKS between Coventry council and Unite union reps and officials have started over the long-running HGV2 drivers' strike.

The strike committee is insistent that any settlement must address the original pay questions and also include the withdrawal of disciplinary action against their deputy convenor Pete Randle.

Local activists have held a series of protests outside any business with any connection to Tom White Waste (TWW) management or which uses the company for refuse collection.

TWW, wholly-owned by the Labour-led council, is organising scabbing to undermine the strike.

These protests have blocked scab trucks leaving TWW for at least 90 minutes on a number

of days. Despite the talks, HGV2 drivers began voting this week to extend the strike by a further 12 weeks.

Unite must keep the pressure on.

This means, for example, calling for and building for a national solidarity demonstration on the Coventry picket line. It also means building the protests outside Tom White Waste.

It would be good if the union organised large numbers of strikers themselves to do this so that no individual is picked on.

Donations are still needed to back one of the longest running Unite disputes in local government.

● Donations to Unity trust Bank, Unite WM/7116 Coventry Local Government, Account Number 20302665, Sort Code 60-83-01. Messages of support to pete_randle@unitetheunion.org.

HACKNEY

Hackney reinforcements

MORE WORKERS could join strikes at Hackney council in east London, for a 10 percent pay rise.

The Unite union is set to ballot 70 workers in the parking services department, which was taken back into the council in April.

They will be asked to join action already taken by around 200 workers in refuse, building services and disability transport

services sections. Unite was also set to hold a rally outside Hackney town hall on Wednesday this week and a lobby of the council's AGM that evening.

Unite officers are working with local trade unionists and community activists in the relaunched Hackney Fightback. This aims to build solidarity across the borough.

Alan Gibson

FURTHER EDUCATION

FE pay fights at colleges in north west England

WORKERS BEGAN a five-day strike at Richmond College in west London on Monday against fire and rehire.

Management's plan will see 127 members of sacked and then made to reapply for their jobs on worse terms and conditions.

Around 50 people joined a rally outside the college.

They were joined by several MPs and UCU general secretary Jo Grady.

College workers struck in several areas across north west England last week to demand a pay rise of at least 8.5 percent.

UCU union members walked out at Burnley College, Bury College, City of Liverpool College, Hopwood Hall, Nelson & Colne College Group and Oldham College on Wednesday.

Workers at The

Manchester College struck last Friday.

Since 2009 workers' wages in further education have plummeted by as much as 35 percent in real terms.

Strikers organised a rally in Manchester. Janet Farrar, the president-elect of UCU, told the crowd that workers are demanding, “proper pay for staff, improved staff lives but also improves students' education”.

There was solidarity at the rally from the Unison union and North West TUC union federation.

Jay McKenna offered full support from the TUC, saying, “It's only trade unions taking action that will make a difference.

There were cheers from the crowd when one worker stood up and proposed that strikes continue.

SCOTLAND

Scottish lecturers escalate

THOUSANDS OF Scottish further education lecturers in the EIS union plan to step up their national strikes to two days a week from Monday.

They were set for their eighth day of national strikes this week with very strong support for previous action on picket lines.

Workers are also withdrawing goodwill and are not giving out exam results to colleges or other bodies.

Incredibly the Scottish government refuses to push through a settlement even though the union's claim is based on figures that emerged last June when inflation was far lower.

The EIS says that during negotiations it reduced the pay claim to a £1,300 salary uplift, from £2,000.

Meanwhile, management has only increased the offer from a £750 uplift to a £850 uplift, with an additional £200, one off “thank you” payment. Instead of telling

college bosses to pay the full claim—and more to recognise current inflation—the Scottish government is acting just like Boris Johnson's regime.

Richard Lochhead, the SNP minister for employment and fair work, said last Sunday that workers should ask themselves whether their pay rise asks would be “affordable” and to compromise amid inflation.

This is set to become an even more urgent question as students want to know their futures.

Educational disruption is wholly the responsibility of the college bosses and the Scottish government.

■ THE EIS and other unions have rejected a pay offer from local authorities and the Scottish government of 2 percent for Scottish school teachers.

The EIS Council has already agreed a ballot for industrial action unless there is a “fair pay settlement”.

MINI

Pay victory in Oxford

WAREHOUSE strikes at the Oxford Mini plant have ended after workers employed by logistics firm Rudolph & Hellman secured a pay deal worth 21 percent over two years.

Around 225 workers, made up of warehouse staff and shunter drivers handling components for the factory, will receive a 19 per cent pay rise over two years.

In addition, the workers will receive a lump sum worth 2 percent, bringing the total increase to 21 percent—worth around £4,000 per year for a dayshift worker.

The deal also includes increases to overtime rates and more working time protections.

They won this inflation-matching deal because of united action and a readiness to keep fighting for as long as it took.

THE SOCIAL Work Action Network conference took place last weekend in Liverpool attended by more than 200 social work professionals with 300 hundred more on-line.

The central theme was that given the levels of poverty, racism and sexism flowing from the government, social work must challenge these aspects of oppression.

Social work is not a neutral profession, it is necessarily drawn into the political. The professional response has to be to organise in the workplace, in the community and in the trade unions.

The conference made clear its support of Stand Up To Racism and the Stop the War Coalition and urged attendees to support the TUC demonstration in London on 18 June.

Steve Anderson

SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

Social work is political

BIG RAIL STRIKES CAN HIT THE TORIES HARD

by SAM ORD

THE TORIES are threatening yet more anti-strike laws that will hit railway workers. It comes just as the RMT union could launch what it calls “the biggest rail strike in modern history”.

The union was set to announce the result of a vote among 40,000 rail workers over pay, compulsory redundancies and changes to working practices this week.

It could see strikes across Britain at Network Rail and 15 English train operating companies.

The possible strikes are worrying the bosses. Network Rail has briefed train and freight operators that in a worst-case scenario, the railway would be forced to go down to running a 12-hour-a-day service.

Ministers and rail industry executives believe that a strike by guards or station staff would be manageable.

But it is the possibility of a national strike at Network Rail, and signallers in particular, which could be too effective for the government to ignore. Services would be “drastically” smaller than normal—around 20 per cent of the current timetable—one rail executive told the Financial Times newspaper.



TORIES AND bosses fear empty stations and mass cancellations

PICTURE: NETWORK RAIL

The freight industry runs a 24-hour service, leaving it even more vulnerable to disruption.

Royal Mail letters and parcels, aviation fuel for

Heathrow and fuel for power stations are some of the goods which could be affected by a strike.

The RMT must immediately turn any yes votes

into hard-hitting action. In response transport secretary Grant Shapps said he is drawing up plans for “minimum service agreements”.

These would set out

services to be provided during any railway walkouts. Any strike will be unlawful unless a minimum service agreement is in place.

And if it is not honoured,

a strike would be illegal, and companies could seek injunctions or damages against unions.

RMT general secretary, Mick Lynch, said the union would build “fierce resistance” if Shapps pushes ahead.

TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady said, “Ministers have spectacularly failed to deal with the cost of living crisis. Now they are trying to distract from their failure by picking a fight with unions.”

They have to turn those words into reality, and other unions must back them. There must not be another defeat as at P&O.

Weaken

Separately, Nadhim Zahawi, the education secretary, plans to weaken unions in schools.

He wants to encourage teachers not to join by changing the law so they can be accompanied to grievance and disciplinary meetings by an external lawyer or representative of a body other than a union.

Currently, the law only requires employers to allow staff to be joined by a trade union representative or colleague.

The Tories talk tough. But strikes can force them back and give an example to many other workers in how to fight over pay and to stop attacks on jobs and conditions.

ScotRail workers right to fight until they get the pay rise they deserve

SCOTRAIL WORKERS are fighting over pay amid chaos for passengers caused by the Scottish government’s refusal to offer anything a rise anywhere near the current inflation rate.

More than a third of daily rail services were halted from Monday.

The frequency of many services will also be reduced with, for example, only one direct service a day running from Mallaig, Lochaber, to Glasgow at

6:03am. This compares with three under the old timetable.

The last train from Edinburgh to Glasgow will be at 10.15pm instead of 11.45pm.

The last service from Glasgow to Stirling is currently 11.51pm, but will now leave at 7.49pm, and the final Glasgow to Aberdeen service will leave at 6.41pm instead of 9.40pm.

All of this hits shift

workers and those in the NHS, as well as people trying to ditch the car or hoping to have a night out.

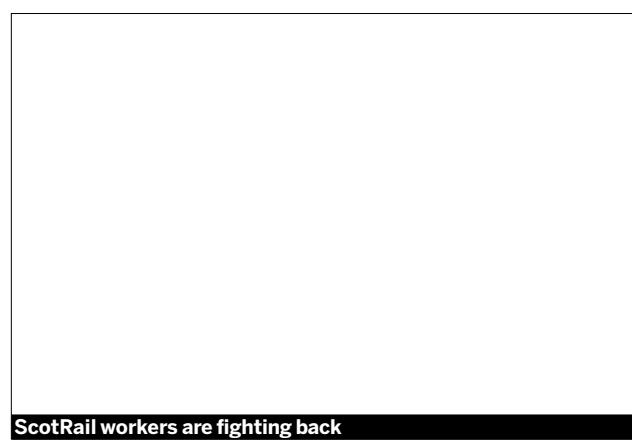
Aslef union members are refusing to work overtime and on rest days as part of a pay battle. Aslef has rejected a 2.2 percent offer, rightly calling it “derisory”.

Aslef’s Scottish Organiser Kevin Lindsay said that, although rail workers might be better paid than some others,

“This isn’t a race to the bottom.”

ScotRail was rightly nationalised last month amid promises of a transformation of the service. Public ownership should mean a more efficient and sustainable service.

But under the Scottish National Party-Green government it means high fares, more cancellations, and scapegoating of unions for problems driven from the top.



ScotRail workers are fighting back